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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IPA ANDREW LENTZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EFIN](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [KWGB](#) [PHUM](#) [EUN](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: SHARM AL-SHEIKH CONFERENCE: DETAILS ON AUSTRIA'S PLEDGE

REF: STATE 20388

¶11. Per reftel, Post sought clarification on Austrian assistance to Palestinians -- specifically GoA pledges made on March 2 in Sharm al-Sheikh -- from the Middle East desk officer at the Department for Development Assistance in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lydia Saadat. Saadat confirmed that Austria has earmarked USD 7.8 million in the 2009 budget for the Palestinians, as indicated in reftel. However, only USD 3.25 million will be disbursed immediately as "humanitarian assistance" to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA); almost USD 400,000 will be given directly to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The remaining USD 4-plus million is subject to the approval of Austria's 2009 federal budget by the Parliament (to be adopted in May). The GOA plans to spend its remaining 2009 aid funding mainly on ongoing bilateral projects in Palestinian areas.

¶12. The Palestinian Territories (PT) have been a "focus region" of Austria's development assistance for many years. Saadat reported that Austria has more than doubled funding to the Palestinians in recent years: in 2007 the budget for the PTs was USD 3.1 million; in 2008 it was USD 6.5 million (but could not be entirely spent due to the Gaza crisis), and will now be raised to USD 7.8 million in 2009.

¶13. Our MFA contact said that half of the bilateral funds would go to Gaza, and half to the West Bank. Water purification and recycling is a particular target of Austrian aid; Saadat reported that fortunately the existing water purification plant in Gaza was not damaged and is functioning again. Other GoA assistance activities include health projects (focusing on chronic diseases) and measures to fight violence against women, in cooperation with local NGOs.

YAP